Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-23 (canceled).

Claim 24 (currently amended): A blow-molded, hot-fill bottle having a longitudinal axis, said bottle including a body having a base closing one end of said bottle, ~~and~~ a sidewall projecting from said base, and a dome with a finish located at an opposite end of said bottle, the improvement comprising:

a plurality of upright columns in said dome extending lengthwise of said ~~body~~ dome in spaced relation; and

a plurality of recessed flex panels in said dome extending between said upright columns, selected ones of said recessed panels including an outwardly concave initiator portion, and the remainder of each of said flex panels being progressively less outwardly concave in a longitudinal direction, as formed, and being adapted to flex in response to vacuum induced in the bottle;

said flex panels accommodating vacuum induced in the bottle as a result of hot-fill processing.

Claim 25 (previously presented): A bottle according to claim 24, wherein each of said panels bows outwardly in a direction longitudinally away from said initiator.

Claim 26 (previously presented): A bottle according to claim 25, wherein said initiator portions function to cause flex panel deflection to occur progressively in a direction from said outwardly concave portions toward said finish in a controlled manner in response to increasing reduction of internal volume of the bottle.

Claim 27 (currently amended): A bottle according to claim 26, wherein said body includes ~~a body portion with said base, a dome with said finish located above the body portion, and~~ a waist connecting the dome and ~~the body portion, said columns extending lengthwise of said dome, said body portion includes a~~ sidewall ~~projecting from said base toward said dome~~;

said columns being circumferentially-spaced and said flex panels being circumferentially spaced and extending laterally between and connecting to an adjacent pair of said columns, each of said panels flexing inwardly in response to a reduction in internal volume when the bottle is hot-filled, capped and permitted to cool for accommodating at least about 90% of a total vacuum absorption required of the bottle; and

said sidewall being reinforced to resist any significant flexure in response to vacuum induced in the bottle as a result of hot-fill processing.

Claim 28 (previously presented): A bottle according to claim 27, wherein, as formed, each column extending along opposite sides of each said panels has a lower end merging into said waist, and the flex panel between said columns is outwardly concave adjacent said waist to provide finger receiving recesses.

Claim 29 (previously presented): A bottle according to claim 28, wherein each flex panel narrows peripherally in an upward direction and each column widens peripherally in an upward direction.

Claim 30 (currently amended): A bottle according to claim 29, wherein said ~~body portion has~~ waist is an inset circumferentially-extending grip ring extending between and connecting said dome and said sidewall.

Claim 31 (previously presented): A bottle according to claim 24, wherein each of said plurality of panels extend and merge directly into adjacent columns without transitional framing walls.

Claim 32 (previously presented): A bottle according to claim 31, wherein said panels extend laterally from said columns such that an obtuse angle is formed between said panel and said column at each panel-to-column juncture on an internal side of said bottle, and wherein said obtuse angle varies progressively along the length of each of said panel-to-column junctures.

Claim 33 (previously presented): A bottle according to claim 32, wherein, as formed, each of said columns widens progressively in an upward direction and their associated flex panel narrows in an upward direction, said obtuse angle at each of said junctures varies along its length with said obtuse angle being greatest where said juncture extends within an upper portion of said body nearer to said finish than to said base and being least where said juncture extends within a lower portion of said body nearer to said base than to said finish.